

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8990

INFO USMISSION BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 9645

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, UR

SUBJECT: DEPARTURE OF SOVIET AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV

1. PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE APRIL 5, SOVIET AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV SPENT HIS LAST FEW DAYS IN FRANCE PRESSING GOF TO MOVE BILATERAL RELATIONS TO " HIGHER STAGE." PRESIDENT POMPIDOU, HOWEVER, REPEATED HIS PERFORMANCE OF 1971, WHEN HE RESISTED MOSCOW PRESURES FOR SIGNING A TREATY DURING BREZHNEV VISIT HERE, BY MAKING CLEAR THAT FRANCE IS CONTENT WITH EXISTING STATE OF RELATIONS AND INTENDS SIMPLY TO EMPHASIZE " CONTINUITY" IN DEVELOPMENT OF FRENCH- SOVIET TIES.

2. THESE CONTRASTING POSITIONS REFLECTED IN TOASTS AT APRIL 3 FAREWELL LUNCHEON FOR ABRASIMOV. POMPIDOU SAID ON THAT OCCASION: " WE EACH HAVE OUR CONVICTIONS, EACH OUR ALLIANCES. BUT WE ARE RESOLUTE IN MAINTAINING (SIC) THE SPIRIT OF DETENTE AND COOPERATION. THAT IS IN ANY CASE THE WILL OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT." ABRASIMOV REPLIED: " THE APPLICATION OF EXISTING ACCORDS AND UNDERSTANDINGS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES RAISES OUR RELATIONS TO AN EVER HIGHER LEVEL MUCH
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IS ALREADY DONE. BUT IT IS QUITE NATURAL THAT . . . (WE EMPHASIZE) THE IMPORTANT POSSIBILITIES NOT YET REALIZED."

3. IN ADDITION TO FAREWELL LUNCHEON BY POMPIDOU, ABRASIMOV WAS GIVEN LUNCHEON MARCH 29 BY ACTING FON MIN BETTENCOURT AND WAS RECEIVED BY PREMIER MESSMER APRIL 2. IN HIS OWN FAREWELL TOAST, BETTENCOURT, WHO SPORADICALLY CROSSED SWORDS WITH ABRASIMOV DURING HIS BRIEF STINT HERE, CALLED ATTENTION TO LATTER' S " TENACITY" IN CARRYING OUT HIS MISSION IN FRANCE. DOUBTLESS WITH EYE ON RECENT STRAINS IN FRENCH- SOVIET RELATIONS PROVOKED BY STRIDENT ANTI- COMMUNISM OF GAULLISTS' LEGISLATIVE ELECTION CAMPAIGN, BETTENCOURT NOTED THAT DESPITE WELL- KNOWN DIFFERENCES, FRANCE AND USSR HAVE ESTABLISHED VIABLE EXAMPLE OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE.

4. IN VARIOUS COMMENTS TO PRESS, ABRASIMOV REPEATEDLY CONFIRMED HE WOULD MOVE INTO HIGH POST DEALING WITH FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE. UPON LEAVING PREMIER MESSMER AT HOTEL MATIGNON RECEPTION, FOR EXAMPLE, ABRASIMOV NOTED HIS PLEASURE IN TAKING ON THESE FOREIGN POLICY RESPONSIBILITIES " WHICH NATURALLY INCLUDE FRANCE." SOVIET POL COUNS SLUSSAR HAS HINTED, IN RESPONSE TO PROBING BY POL COUNS, THAT ABRASIMOV MAY ASSUME NUMBER ONE FOREIGN AFFAIRS JOB IN CC.

5. WHILE AT ORLY AIRPORT FOR ABRASIMOV' S WELL- ATTENDED DEPARTURE, I WAS TOLD BY SOVIET EMBOFF THAT ABRASIMOV' S SUCCESSOR, AMBASSADOR CHERVONENKO, IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE BY MAY -- PERHAPS EVEN IN TIME FOR SOVIET MAY 1 RECEPTION. MEANTIME, DCM OBEREMKO WILL REMAIN AS CHARGE D' AFFAIRS, BUT SOVIET POL COUNS SLUSSAR TELLS US THAT OBEREMKO TOO WILL LEAVE FRANCE " SOON" TO TAKE UP NEW DUTIES IN FON MIN. ASKED WHETHER ASSIGNMENT HERE OF CHERVONENKO, WHO IS BEST KNOWN IN FRANCE FOR HIS TOUGHNESS IN CZECHOSLOVAK " NORMALIZATION," MIGHT SIGNAL HARDENING OF FRENCH - SOVIET RELATIONS, SLUSSAR FIRMLY REJECTED THIS VIEW. HE SAID CHERVONENKO SELECTED BECAUSE OF HIS STATUS AS CC MEMBER AND HIS PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN PEKING AND PRAGUE. SLUSSAR PREDICTED CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF " FRIENDLY" PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE TIES ALONG PRESENT LINES.
IRWIN

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